DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 228 665 CS 504 152

AUTHOR Staley, Constance M.
TITLE Managerial Women in Mixed Groups: Implications of Recent Research.
PUB DATE Feb 83
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western Speech Communication Association (Albuquerque, NM, February 19-22, 1983).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Communication Research; Coping; *Employed Women; Group Behavior; Group Dynamics; Interaction; Leadership; Males; *Management Development; Management Teams; *Managerial Occupations; *Organizational Communication; Power Structure; *Sex Bias; Sex Role; Sex Stereotypes; Status; *Tokenism; Womens Education

ABSTRACT

Research on the problems faced by women in managerial positions is reviewed in this paper. Work in the area of tokenism is presented first, followed by similar research documenting the fact that females participating in mixed groups operate at a disadvantage. Research on the problems of women in leadership roles is presented next. Other experiments about females in mixed groups that produced potentially positive results are also reviewed. The last part of the paper presents ways the findings of the research previously reviewed could be used to improve instruction on female interaction in mixed groups in existing management training programs. (JL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED228665

MANAGERIAL WOMEN IN MIXED GROUPS: IMPLICATIONS OF RECENT RESEARCH

by

Constance M. Staley

University of Colorado

at

Colorado Springs

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Constance M. Staley

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS504152

By now it is a well known fact that although women in the United States compose 42.5% of the work force, they hold very few of the positions boasting high prestige and high pay (U.S. Department of Labor, 1982). The proportion of women holding administrative or managerial positions stood at 6.1% as of 1978; however, most of the managerial positions comprising that percentage were entry-level or slightly above (Baron, 1977; Patterson, 1975; in White, De Sanctis, & Crino, 1981). In fact, one source reports that at top executive levels as late as 1975, men outnumbered women 600 to 1 (Myer, 1975).

Although the rate at which women have moved into prestigious careers has been slower than predicted in the early years of the women's movement, there is evidence to suggest that such a transition is taking place. Between 1970 and 1978, for example, the rate at which women moved into managerial-administrative positions increased 16 times more rapidly than during the previous twenty years (White, et al., 1981).

With a general drive toward equalization of male-female participation at top levels of management, should go an equal concern for women's effectiveness and satisfaction in these positions. Much of current research, however, indicates that a high level of effectiveness is not readily reached, either in actuality or in the perceptions of subordinates. While much of this research appears negative, it creates by implication the possibilities for positive alternatives to the present situation. In this review, representative recent research on women in mixed groups has been assembled, and close analysis reveals three possible suggestions for implementing change. This research may be used to prepare managerial women in mixed groups for predominant male-female reactions to their presence; to help women come to some understanding of their own behavior in mixed groups; and

to teach such women valuable coping skills.

With men outnumbering women by as much as 600 to 1 in the executive suite, it follows that managerial women will often find themselves members of management "teams" which are examples of skewed groups--where the ratio of one type of person (male) to another (female) approximates 85:15. The work of Kanter (1975, 1977, 1978), who describes the composition of such groups in terms of "dominants" and "tokens", is fundamentally important to this topic. Tokens are usually single individuals (especially if the overall size of the group is small) or occasionally two or more individuals; but even then it is difficult for these few to generate any kind of powerful alliance. Kanter's main thesis is that group structures influence group interaction, particularly patterns of male-female interaction, to a degree not previously realized (Kanter, 1977).

Tokens, according to Kanter, are not simply group deviants or members who differ from the rest of the group in nonsignificant ways; rather, they are "people identified by ascribed characteristics (master statuses such as sex, race, religion, ethnic group, age, etc.) or other characteristics that carry with them a set of assumptions about culture, status, and behavior highly salient for majority category members" (1977, p. 968). Tokens, therefore, are symbols; however, one of a kind is not necessarily a token, if one's presence is incorporated into the dominant culture, rather than simply a reflection of the rarity of one particular type in that system. Tokens, therefore, may be blacks in white work groups, one or two male nurses working with female nurses, or professional women in typically male fields. Two conditions appear to intensify the effects of tokenism: first, the tokens' differences are physically observable, and second, the token is new to the group. Certainly women joining male management hierarchies

satisfy these two conditions.

According to Kanter (1977), tokenism is a new area for research. The sex composition of groups was often not reported in studies of sex differences until recently; however, when groups are skewed as they often are in the organizational setting, for example, it may be true that this imbalance encourages participants into particular roles. This encouragement grows out of three perceptual processes associated with tokens: visibility, the result of being unlike the majority; polarization, the exaggeration of differences; and assimilation, or attempts to distort tokens' characteristics in order to fit a stereotyped generalization. Visibility creates performance pressures; polarization results in heightened boundaries and isolation of the token; and assimilation may result in the token's "role entrapment" (p. 972).

These results of the phenomenon of tokenism on tokens' behavior emerged from Kanter's field study of Industrial Supply Corporation (a pseudonym). Women in all male groups reported feeling that all their behaviors were public, as if viewed by an audience. Some were even told by male executives that they represented other women in the corporation, and that their behaviors carried "symbolic consequences." While tokens did not have to work hard to be noticed (quite the contrary), they did have to work harder than males in the group to prove their competence. Dominants, for example, remembered token's dress over and above their substantive contributions. Despite this fact, tokens felt compelled not to overexcell and thereby embarrass a dominant. Dominants, on the other hand, most often dealt with tokens by inducting them into one of four stereotyped roles: mother, seductress, pet, or iron maiden. Kanter concludes her field study by generalizing that "these consequences of token status also indicate that tokens may undergo a great deal of stress and may need

to expend extra energy to maintain a satisfactory relationship in the work situation" (p. 987).

Although Kanter's field observations are limited in that they represent a single researcher's viewpoint, the premise that females participating in mixed groups operate at a disadvantage has certainly been documented elsewhere. Meeker and Weitzel-O'Neill (1977), for example, suggest that sex operates in groups as an external status characteristic. Further, those with low status in groups, such as women in mixed sex groups, face fundamental inequality or "interaction disability", in that they have a difficult time influencing group decisions (Ridgeway, 1982). According to Ridgeway, "low external status members will be given and will accept fewer opportunities to interact, will be less likely to have their contributions and suggestions positively evaluated by the group, and will have less influence over group decisions" (p.77).

In a descriptive study with analogous findings, Wolman and Frank (1975) studied three T-groups and three work groups of peers, each containing only one woman. Group interactions were analyzed through the use of tapes, diaries and questionnaires. Of the six women in these skewed groups, only one achieved low-status regular membership. Four occupied "deviant" roles which caused them unhappiness, while one accepted the role of isolate in the group. Some women attempted to keep busy so as not to be concerned with complete acceptance. For a woman isolated in an all-male group, the authors conclude that "'feminine' coping mechanisms increased her perceived differences, 'masculine' ones threatened the men so they isolated her more" (Wolman & Frank, 1975, p. 168)--a classic double bind.

Such observations on female participation in mixed groups suggest two equally important questions regarding managerial women which have been

treated experimentally by various researchers. Precisely how difficult is it for females in male-dominated groups to demonstrate competence to the point of emerging as group leaders? Further, what are male and female reactions to emergent or appointed female leadership? In light of Department of Labor predictions that increasingly more American women will begin to spend more of their lives working than homemaking, such questions are particularly relevant.

Leadership has typically been associated with positively valued traits for men such as aggression, competitiveness, and rationality, rather than the stereotyped traits of women such as dependence, passivity, and emotionality (Jacobson & Efferts, 1974). Schein (1975) indicates, however, that both male and female middle managers are perceived by superiors of both sexes as having "male" characteristics, attitudes, and temperaments. Terborg (1977), in his review of females who accept careers in management, concludes that such women have values, needs, and motives which are similar to those of their male counterparts. Bartol's comprehensive review of the literature (1977) reports few actual differences between male and female leadership styles.

Female leaders, then, defy cultural stereotypes, and, predictably, research indicates an adverse reaction by both males and females to female leadership. Kanter, for example, reports a 1965 Harvard Business Review survey of 900 female and 1000 male executives, in which more than two-thirds of the men and one-fifth of the women reported that they would not be comfortable working for a woman. Of the sample, 51% of the men remarked that women are "temperamentally unfit" for management, saying things such as, "They scare male executives to death...as for an efficient woman manager, this is cultural blasphemy..." (Bowman, Worthy, & Greyser, 1965; in Kanter, 1975).

Even if a woman has formal authority based on position, it is difficult to exercise this authority over "prejudiced" males. This was demonstrated in a study of female executives done in the late 1950's (Cussler, 1958). In one instance where a female had formal authority over a male work group, the males rejected her role and reported informally to her male superior. They also frequently met for luncheon dates to share information among themselves. She retaliated with more formal meetings which she saw as meetings with her staff, but which they saw as "a mutual protection society for the interchange of ideas" (Cussler, 1958). Even though such reports are now "dated," more recent research indicates that leadership still tends to be perceived as primarily a male role.

Bormann, Pratt, and Putnam (1978), for example, created a zero-history organization in a classroom and noted that when females emerged as key decision-makers, male responses included withdrawal from participation, striving for leadership followed by resentment and withdrawal, and participation in the socio-emotional dimension through joking and sarcasm. Furthermore, shared fantasies of sexual symbols helped account for those male responses.

Such research would indicate that female leaders, whether they emerge in groups or are appointed to such positions, begin at a disadvantage. Preparation for such potentially negative attitudes could be helpful to a female entering the management hierarchy.

There is some evidence that females avoid leadership positions when matched with males. Megargee (1969) paired groups of subjects (two males, two females, or a male and a female) based on their scores on a written test for dominance. A high dominant was placed with a low dominant (although subjects did not know this), and each group was asked to select a leader. When groups were either all-male or all-female, the high dominant partner

became the leader in 70% of the pairs. In female-male groups with the male dominant, 90% of the males became leaders; however, in pairs with the female dominant, she became leader in only 20% of the pairs. Ironically, in other cases, the dominant female appointed the male as leader. Not only are women in leadership positions often perceived negatively, but they themselves may evidence discomfort with the leadership role.

In a more recent study investigating this issue, Golub and Cantz (1982) found that females are still less likely to assume leadership roles when paired with males. In mixed sex pairs, females assumed leadership positions 33% of the time, in comparison with 60% in same-sex pairs. Differences in dominance on the California Psychological Inventory were not related to leadership behavior, causing the authors to conclude, "Megargee's research and the present study suggest that sex-role attitudes rather than competence or dominance determine leadership behavior in cross-sex pairs, at least during an initial encounter. Apparently women, as well as men, still think that women should not be leaders" (p. 89).

There is also some evidence that group members judge male leaders more harshly than female leaders. In a study by Jacobson and Effertz (1974), for example, college students formed three person groups with varied sex composition. Half the groups were all-male or all-female, and half were male groups with female leaders or vice versa. In the mixed groups the lone male or female was designated leader, although subjects thought selection was random. The task was to arrange dominoes in a very difficult pattern (all groups were doomed to failure), and only the leader had directions. Interestingly, male leaders were evaluated more harshly than female leaders

by group members. Males are expected to provide good leadership; when this stereotype was not fulfilled, dissatisfaction occurred. According to the overall stereotype then, females should defer to males, who are more appropriate leaders and who therefore should also be more skilled in leadership behaviors.

Further research on female leadership in mixed groups and sex role attitudes is provided by Yerby (1975). Several pretests were given to determine subjects' attitudes toward women in leadership positions, and the task was a replication of the Maier Changing Work Production exercise. Results include the following: (1) groups with equal numbers of males and females and positive attitudes toward female leadership were most satisfied with their female leaders; (2) groups most dissatisfied with their female leaders were groups with one female and three males and positive attitudes, and groups with equal representation and negative attitudes. Yerby concludes that it is possible that males in positive-attitude groups demanded more of their female leaders and that these female leaders behaved defensively (p.167). Based on this research it may be argued that when and if cultural stereotypes begin to fade, group members will expect superior performance from a leader of either sex, and females in those positions of leadership will have to deal successfully with their own discomfort in a typically male role. Training females in leadership skills could be highly beneficial in this regard.

The results of experiments, by Eskilson and Wiley (1976), Piliavin and Martin (1978), Bradley (1980) and Ridgeway (1982), which also have implications for training female managers, suggest trends in a positive direction. First, females who earn leadership positions can perform exceedingly well; second, encouraging female participation in the task appears to have a

positive effect on both male and female group members' participation.

In a study by Eskilson and Wiley (1976) subjects were divided into three person same-sex or mixed-sex groups for a puzzle assembling activity. Interactions were videotaped and analyzed by two raters using simplified Bales (1950) scoring. Leadership was allowed to emerge in some groups and was designated in others. Several findings tended to confirm sex role stereotypes: male leaders concentrated on recognizable leadership behaviors more than female leaders overall, female leaders performed more positive affect activities, and female leaders were reluctant to choose themselves as future leaders. Also, both male and female leaders concentrated more on leadership behaviors in same-sex groups. The authors report, however, that females who attained leadership positions showed intense task involvement while also fulfilling their socioemotional role expectations: "Like some working wives, they took on two jobs. Thus females who attained the leader role by personal achievement rose to the instrumental challenge, but did not discard their deeply internalized obligation to provide for the emotional needs of others. They appeared to merge the two conflicting sets of role expectations" (Eskilson & Wiley, 1976, p. 192).

Along these lines, a recent experiment conducted by Bradley (1980) demonstrates that females may augment their influence in male dominated groups by demonstrating high task competence. While such women were not necessarily well liked, they were treated with friendliness, reason, and few displays of dominance by males. Bradley states optimistically, "Perhaps once a woman has established her knowledge, skills, or ability, she can thereafter be considered for her human qualities rather than her gender" (p. 109). Likewise, the results of a recent experiment using same and mixed sex groups by Ridgeway (1982) supports the notion that females can overcome interaction disability in mixed groups by "combining reasonably

competent task contributions with the explicit communication of group-oriented [rather than self-oriented] motivation" (p. 85, emphasis mine).

Finally in a recent study by Piliavin and Martin (1978), Bales revised interaction category analyses (1970) were used to analyze audiotapes of interaction in 46 mixed-sex groups, 15 female groups, and 16 male groups. During the second of three activities, experimenters reinforced initially quiet (target) persons by flashing them green lights when they contributed. More talkative group members were flashed red lights now and then when they spoke and green lights occasionally when they were quiet. In 16 mixed-sex groups, the target persons were male; in 32 such groups, the target persons were female. While the authors admit the shortcomings of using audiotapes only, the results are worth noting. Male and female behaviors fit sex role expectations, in that females engaged in more socioemotional behaviors and males in more task behaviors; however, in mixed-sex groups individuals engaged in more behaviors appropriate to the opposite sex. In groups where males were reinforced, females became more socioemotionally-oriented; but in mixed groups where females were reinforced, both sexes became less sex-role stereotyped in their behaviors. In fact, the authors report that in such groups, males and females performed equal amounts of task and socio-emotional behaviors in the final discussions. They conclude, "the results of the present study suggest that a concerted effort to encourage task-oriented participation on the part of the females...can increase behavioral options for both sexes" (Piliavin & Martin, 1978, p. 294). The implications for training females in mixed groups are indeed encouraging.

The main thesis of this review is that representative recent research falls into three categories for improved female participation in mixed groups.

Assuming equalization of the sex balance in the organizational setting is a desirable goal, theoretical principles from research may be put to practical use to achieve those goals, as well as to teach women more effectiveness in management positions. It is important to note that the most common complaint leveled at the managerial woman is that she does not know how to "play" on a management "team," and on the other hand, the most common complaint made by these women is that their male co-workers exclude them from the "team" (Henning & Jardim, 1977; Harragan, 1977). Yet in a review of 121 management training programs for women (Hay, 1980), it appears that specific skills in the area of female participation in mixed groups are often not sufficiently stressed. Seventy-five percent of the seminars, workshops, tape and cassette programs, and books and publications summarized by Hay include training in management functions (planning, organizing, controlling, decision-making, and EEO/Affirmative Action strategies); 43% of the programs include self-awareness; 37% include uniqueness of women; 26% include career development; 22% include relationships and/or conflict; and only 12% include leadership skills. Many of these programs are remiss because they have concentrated on teaching women self-awareness and individual skills, such as goal development or risk-taking, despite the fact that, admittedly, individuality is a problem for most women in organizations.

The research summarized here points to a need for in-depth instruction on female interaction in mixed groups in existing management training programs for women. Studies appear to fall into three primary categories to facilitate this instruction:

1. Group - Male and female reactions to females in mixed groups.
2. Individual - Female behavior in mixed groups.
3. Coping Skills - Improved female interaction in mixed groups.

The first two categories deal with increasing awareness, the last with implementing change, based on this increased awareness.

First, much of the research presented here may be used to prepare managerial women for both male and female reactions to their presence in mixed groups. These women should be familiar with the field observations of Kanter on the group dynamics of tokenism, and the isolation and double bind situation in which women found themselves in Wolman and Frank's T-groups and work groups. Using research as a theoretical base, managerial women may be taught that leadership has traditionally been a male role; and while male leaders may be judged more critically because of this fact (Jacobson and Effertz), women should also be prepared for negative reactions from both males and females who are not comfortable with women violating this tradition (Bowman, Worthy, and Greyser; Cussler). In addition, however, as these cultural stereotypes begin to fade and people become more comfortable with female leaders, there is some indication that women will be judged more critically as well (Yerby), thereby underlying the need for women to enhance their capabilities as leaders.

Second, the research presented here may be used to help women come to some understanding of their own behavior in mixed groups. Again Kanter's work on tokenism applies directly, as does the work by Megargee and Golub and Cantz on female avoidance of leadership positions. Dispite females' initial discomfort with leadership roles, the encouraging news is that female emergent leaders may be highly successful because they appear to be able to combine both task and socioemotional involvement (Eskilson and Wiley). Furthermore, by demonstrating high task competence (Bradley) and group-oriented communication (Ridgeway), women may augment their influence in groups dominated by men. Eventually encouraging such behavior from women may serve to "increase

behavioral options for both sexes" (Piliavin and Martin).

After increasing women's awareness in these major areas, training programs should be devised to center on specific coping skills for women in mixed groups. In a recent study of problems facing managerial women (Shockley & Staley, 1980), 43% of the respondents identified their own failure to speak up as their greatest problem in male/female groups within the organization. Another 22% indicated their greatest problem to be interruptions by males. The implication here is that while it is important to increase women's awareness of what to expect from themselves and others, it may be even more important for training programs to provide for instruction and practice in particular skills which will help raise the qualitative and quantitative levels of women's participation. Such skills should include the cultivation of nonverbal symbols of power and instruction and practice in verbal and nonverbal skills effective in controlling group discussion, for example turn-requesting, turn-maintaining, turn-denying, and "turn-returning" cues or running interference for other women in the group (Wiemann & Knapp, 1975).

If women are to be taught coping skills most effectively, however, it must be known at more than a general level what works and what does not. In order to teach specific coping skills, it is necessary to know more about specific behaviors.

Although further research is still needed to identify specific practical skills, training women in group communication strategies would be a valuable addition to the curricula of management training programs. Undoubtedly, improved group communication skills can enable managerial women to more successfully demonstrate their credibility, their competence, and their commitment.

REFERENCES

Bartol, K. Male versus female organizational leaders: a review of comparative literature. Syracuse, N Y: School of Management, 1977.

Bormann, E. G., Pratt, J., and Putnam, L. Power, authority, and sex: male responses to female leadership. Communication Monographs, 1978, 45, 119-155.

Bradley, P. H. Sex, competence and opinion deviation: an expected states approach. Communication Monographs, 1980, 47 (2), 101-110.

Cussler, M. The Woman Executive. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1958.

Eskilson, A., and Wiley, M. G. Sex composition and leadership in small groups. Sociometry, 1976, 39 (3), 183-194.

Golub, S., and Canty, E. M. Sex-role expectations and the assumption of leadership by college women. Journal of Social Psychology, 1982, 116 (Pt. 1), 83-90.

Harragan, B. L. Games Mother Never Taught You: Corporate Gamesmanship for Women. New York: Rawson Associates, 1977.

Hay, C. D. Women in management: the obstacles and opportunities they face. Personnel Administrator, 1980, 25 (4), 31-39.

Henley, N. M. Body Politics: Power, Sex, and Nonverbal Communication. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1977.

Hennig, M., and Jardim, A. The Managerial Woman. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1977.

Jacobson, M. B., and Effertz, J. Sex roles and leadership: perceptions of the leaders and the led. Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 1974, 12, 383-96.

Kanter, R. M. Women and the structure of organizations: exploration in theory and behavior. Sociological Inquiry, 1975, 45 (2-3), 34-74.

Kanter, R. M. Men and Women of the Corporation. New York: Basic Books, 1977.

Kanter, R. M. Some effects of proportions on group life: skewed sex ratios and responses to token women. American Journal of Sociology, 1977, 82 (5), 965-990.

Meeker, B. F., and Weitzel-O'Neill, P. A. Sex roles and interpersonal behavior in task oriented groups. American Sociological Review, 1977 42, 92-105.

Megargee, E. I. Influence of sex roles on the manifestation of leadership. Journal of Applied Psychology, 1969, 53, 377-382.

Myer, P. Women Executives are different. Dun's Review, 1975, 105, 47-48.

Piliavin, A., and Martin, R. R. The effects of the sex composition of groups on style and social interactions. Sex Roles, 1978, 4 (2), 281-296.

Ridgeway, C. L. Status in groups: the importance of motivation. American Sociological Review, 1982, 47 (1) 76-87.

Schein, V. A. Relationships between sex role stereotypes and requisite management characteristics among female managers. Journal of Applied Psychology, 1975, 60 (3), 340-344.

Shockley, P., and Staley, C. M. Women in management training programs: what they think about key issues. Public Personnel Management, 1980, 9 (3), 214-224.

Terborg, J. R. Women in management: a research review. Journal of Applied Psychology, 1977, 62, 647-664.

U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment and earnings. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, September, 1982.

White, M. C., DeSanctis, G., and Crino, M. D. Achievement, self-confidence, personality traits, and leadership ability: a review of literature on sex differences. Psychological Reports, 1981, 48 (2), 547-569.

Wiemann, J. M., and Knapp, M. L. Turn-taking in conversations. Journal of Communication, 1975, 25, 75-92.

Wolman, C., and Frank, H. The solo woman in a professional peer group. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 1975, 45, 164-171.

Yerby, J. Attitude, task, and sex composition as variables affecting feminine leadership in small problem solving groups. Speech Monographs, 1975, 42, 160-168.